



Photo by Cassandra Albert

Me, a Wimp? Never

By Lt. Vince Willis
VR-54

How would I be able to get a good aerobic workout to complement my running program for the Navy's physical-readiness requirements? A 10-mile ride on my mountain bike to work was the perfect answer. I even had a riding partner, Tim, from my squadron.

Starting the day with a 50-minute bike ride is great. The New Orleans heat hasn't hit yet, the sun is just rising, and over half our route is along a levee of the Mississippi River. However, at the end of the day, the New Orleans heat is raging, and I usually manage to get a ride home with someone. Tim, who is in a bit better shape than I am, usually rides his bike.

One day, as Tim and I walked our bikes into the hangar, he asked me if I would make the ride back home with him that afternoon. With my endorphins flowing from the ride in, I said I would.

On my way to a locker room for a badly needed shower, I met our corpsman in the passageway.

"Sir, we're updating shot records. Come on in."

Three shots later (gotta love that Anthrax—and it seems I always need a Hepatitis A or B or something), I finished my shower and put on my khakis for another grueling day as squadron personnel officer.

Lunchtime quickly approached. I usually carry a lunch to work, but I hadn't that day. Too much trouble when I'm biking. However, I did have snacks in my desk, which got me through.

When 1600 came around, I was having second thoughts about riding home. The heat and humidity were up, and I wasn't feeling that great. However, bagging out of the ride home would have been a sign of weakness, and I couldn't do that. So off we went. And, eventually, off the bike I went—less than a mile into the ride, I was splayed on the side of the road, having gone down hard on my right side. I had cracked my helmet on the curb and skinned myself pretty good. The fall also broke my cell phone in my Camelbak, but Tim had his. I called my wife to pick me up.

Satisfied I was O.K., Tim continued home. As I waited for my wife to load up three kids and head toward the base to pick me up, I went over the day's events and started thinking how I could have managed the risks.

Three significant things contributed to my mishap. One, getting those shots, which had to have some effect on me physically, regardless of what the injections were for. Two, skipping lunch was stupid. There was a coffee mess downstairs from my office with sandwiches and more. Three, succumbing to peer pressure and having a fragile ego kept me from making the right decision to catch a ride home on a day when I didn't feel I was at 100 percent.

My injuries could have been much worse, and I know my helmet served its purpose. Before we got home, my wife insisted on taking me to the base clinic, where the same corpsman that had given me the shots that morning scraped the gravel out of my right shoulder, elbow, palm, and knee. He then told me that my tetanus shot was approaching 10 years old and gave me a fourth (and final) shot for the day. **■**